



# Education Connections: Issues and Answers

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## **Question:** What is “sheltering” or “sheltered instruction” and where did it come from?

The genesis of the term ‘Sheltered’ in the context of language minority schooling is sometimes connected with “Sheltered English” instruction. At times also referred to as “Sheltered or Structured English,” this model for teaching English learners is closely related with “Sheltered/Structured English Immersion,” (SEI) which refers to limiting ELs’ instructional settings to those in which English is the primary medium of instruction. The emergence of SEI as an established approach to teaching ELs derives from a study commissioned by the Reagan Administration to compare the effectiveness of Transitional Bilingual Education, Maintenance Bilingual Education, and SEI models. The resulting Baker de Kanter Report (1981) advocated the use of SEI for ELs in the United States, based on review of findings from three studies—two in Canadian French Immersion settings and one in McAllen, Texas, in which the majority students and teachers were Spanish-English bilingual. Widely criticized due to the contextual differences between U.S. and Canadian models, SEI was many years later, used as the foundation for the English-only movement, in which supporters aimed to eliminate bilingual education in various states (California, Arizona, Colorado, and Massachusetts).

Another version of ‘sheltered’ for teaching non-mainstream language speakers is

“sheltered content” instruction, which has also been further extended and applied to settings called “content based” instruction. The origin of “sheltered content” is more difficult to trace. Early references include Krashen’s *Insights and Inquiries* (1984), and Snow and Brinton (1984), drawing from Wesche (1983). Both Snow and Brinton and Wesche are researchers working in settings also distinct from the U.S. The educational settings for which they describe “sheltered content” are Canadian universities and the target population are native French-speaking English as a second language learners. The goals targeted in these cases involved better promoting students’ access to postsecondary content classes—specifically, Psychology.

In both cases, the general idea in U.S. schools today is that teachers make adaptations to their instruction to improve accessibility to subject area matters while also providing varied opportunities for students to practice English, thereby theoretically simultaneously promoting students’ learning of both content, as well as English, without sacrificing either. Sheltered English instruction may be delivered in a range of settings, including in mainstream classes taught by practitioners without credentials in English as a Second Language or Bilingual methods; classes with co-teachers, in which one has expertise in ESL instruction; or, in ESL pull-out classes.

## How does Education Connections define sheltering?

CAL's Education Connections involves the provision of professional development and other supports to a diverse range of practitioners, both those with EL expertise, as well as content area teachers. To position these activities, the Four Strands of Sheltered Instruction serve as a framework for representing what we mean by "sheltered" or "sheltering" in the context of CAL's Education Connections endeavors. The Four Strands are: Define, Modify, Adapt, and Cultivate, each of which is further explicated by three sub-points, which are outlined below.

We suggest that teachers whose instruction corresponds with the Four Strands and associated twelve points will be better equipped to support the needs of English learners. The Strands are not intended to comprehensively represent an approach to sheltering that benefits English learners. Rather, we present these to reflect some of the key theoretical underpinnings upon which we believe successful methods for ELs are best developed. In subsequent editions of Education Connections: Issues and Answers will expound upon details related to the Four Strands.

## The Four Strands of Sheltered Instruction

### Define

- Develop, define, refine, communicate, and assess *content objectives* for every lesson.
- Develop, define, refine, communicate, and assess *language objectives* for every lesson.
- Ensure objectives derive from, and are aligned with, English language proficiency (ELP) standards and content standards.

### Modify

- Differentiate instruction through lesson adaptation and instructional modifications.
- Scaffold instruction in response to students' individualized language and content learning needs.
- Identify the language demands and domains embedded in lessons and explicitly address language use and needs for both teaching and learning.

### Cultivate

- Explicitly identify and acknowledge the cultural competence, human capital, knowledge, experiences, and resources students bring to the classroom.
- Invite parental and/or familial involvement in the school and classroom and make connections that extend beyond the core curriculum.
- Support native language maintenance, additive bilingualism, and biliteracy development.

### Apply

- Directly promote language use through interaction with peers, teachers, as well as the core content.
- Encourage and facilitate language use in both English and the students' home languages.
- Develop and implement activities that require use of all four language domains.

■ *Education Connections: Issues and Answers* is a publication of CAL's Education Connections, a free, online network for teachers working with English learners.

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CAL's Education Connections  
4646 40th Street NW, Washington, DC 20016  
<https://edconnect.obaverse.net>  
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